



Research and Reference Service

OVERSEAS REACTION TO THE CUBAN SITUATION
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SUMMARY

A mixture of welcome relief and some surprise continued to typify available comment on the latest Khrushchev letter and President Kennedy's reply.

Western European comment -- the only area reporting extensive attention -- went on to assess the most recent developments. Many saw the outcome as proof that U.S. firmness had brought about a salutary and, perhaps, far-reaching change in the balance of power. Numerous comments lauded President Kennedy's firmness and courage, while some stressed Khrushchev's realism and cautioned against pushing him too far at this time. Others speculated on the future of disarmament and other related issues.

Spotty comment -- both official and editorial -- from elsewhere also viewed the latest developments with open relief, and some went on to assess the situation to some degree.

First reports from Latin America suggest great satisfaction over President Kennedy's "extraordinary diplomatic victory." In Venezuela the President of the dominant party was quoted as viewing developments as proof that Cuba had become a beachhead for military penetration of the continent.

There are some indications from Africa that latest developments are viewed as a defeat for the Soviet and as revealing that Cuba was, after all, a Soviet satellite. The Ghana Times has lauded Khrushchev for his great concessions to mankind, while another paper praised the Ghana government for its role in achieving a negotiated solution. Meanwhile, earlier comment coming in has shown considerable pro-U.S. opinion among Ghana University students.

Comment from the Near East and South Asia on the most recent developments has been sparse, as has comment from the Far East. There have been indications that the image of Khrushchev as a "peace maker" prevails in the UAR, Syria, and Iraq.

Voluminous Soviet propaganda -- almost devoid of interpretation and elucidation -- suggests a number of difficulties may be confronting the Kremlin at this crucial moment in Soviet international public relations. The Satellites offer no more than the Soviet in terms of enlightening comment.

WESTERN EUROPE

Relief was universal over the apparent Soviet backdown on Cuba. Many media saw the outcome as proof that US determination had brought about a salutary and, perhaps, far-reaching change in the balance of power. The President's courage and firmness were lauded by a good number of papers. Others stressed Khrushchev's realism and warned against cornering him, fearing that he might fall. The UN and its Secretary-General were ever more frequently looked to as many media clamored for the resumption of negotiations on disarmament and Berlin. Some speculated on such diverse topics as the implications of the Cuba news for the Sino-Indian conflict, European integration and future US policy toward Cuba.

Western Europe expressed great relief at the apparent withdrawal of the two super-powers from the brink of war. A majority interpreted the event not only as an overwhelming US victory and sign of Soviet weakness but as proof that a policy of strength was the best way to deal with the Soviets. Rome's center Il Messaggero declared that "the first element to consider is that with today comes the burial of the legend...of Soviet military superiority". The Salzburger Nachrichten (independent) found evidence of "a fundamental change in the world's historical development since 1945... American determination has for the first time been taken seriously by Moscow. The knowledge that the United States is no 'paper tiger' is the most important result of the crisis". Another Austrian paper added that had such determination been displayed in the past, many other Western positions might have been saved. Lord Beaverbrook's Daily Express (conservative) called the U.S. triumph a "victory for peace" and attributed it to "boldness and tenacity in policy matched by strength and realism".

Some media, especially in Britain but to some extent elsewhere, found words of praise for Khrushchev's apparent moderation and were clearly alarmed lest he be pushed into a corner or perhaps succumb to domestic opposition. Hopes were expressed that the Americans would not push him too hard. Thus London's conservative Daily Mail, London, in an editorial entitled "The Courage of Khrushchev" declared: "This is not the time to crow over him and taunt him with a climb-down".

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In Switzerland, the Gazette de Lausanne (liberal) echoed: "Let's not press Mr. Khrushchev too hard". Rome's right-center Il Tempo, which has long favored a firm stand, warned that "it is better to talk to a Khrushchev in trouble because of his flexibility than with a Marshal Malinovsky sure only of the power of his missiles".

A number of papers, particularly in Germany and France were frankly mystified as to the Kremlin's motives and warned against an easy assumption that the danger was past. Thus Hamburg's influential Die Welt (independent) wondered editorially what Khrushchev still had "up his sleeve" and whether he sees "a new field of contest with a better starting position" - presumably Berlin.

Most media hoped that the two world powers could find a basis for broadening negotiations to include other outstanding problems and looked to the UN and its Secretary-General for solutions. Papers generally underlined the importance of Khrushchev's acceptance of inspection in Cuba and many hoped that a breakthrough could be achieved in the stumbling-block of "verification" in matters pertaining to disarmament and a nuclear test ban. Munich's left-center Süddeutsche Zeitung spoke for many in pointing to the enhancement of "chances for the discussion of wider measures of disarmament" once the Cuban affair is finally settled. Britain's national dailies were ardent supporters of far-reaching negotiations, though none except the tabloid Daily Mirror (Labor) went so far as to suggest that the U.S. make its contribution to a good climate by making a bid for Cuban friendship. In Italy, however, the Nenni-Socialist organ Avanti (Milan) found the moment opportune to "express our solidarity with the Cuban revolution".

Moderate-left Paris-Jour, on the other hand, underlined the importance of allied solidarity in this phase; "If the hour for supreme negotiation has in effect arrived, it is more important than ever before for all Western countries to close ranks with the U.S.".

Individual papers related the weekend developments to other pressing problems, the foremost being the Sino-Indian dispute. The liberal Guardian (London) found that "Khrushchev's capitulation is a victory ... also for his Chinese opponents.... India may therefore have to bear the brunt of /his/ failure in the Caribbean". In Belgium, Het Volk (Catholic-labor, Ghent) found a new argument for European unification in the obvious powerlessness of individual European countries during the crisis.

LATIN AMERICA

First press service reports on Brazil indicate great satisfaction in government circles over President Kennedy's "extraordinary diplomatic victory." President Goulart, following through on his expressed desire to "collaborate more intensely for a solution of the Cuban crisis," has now given tangible proof of his good intentions with the assignment of General Albino da Silva, head of the President's personal military staff, to accompany acting UN Secretary General U Thant on his mission to Cuba tomorrow. Agence France Presse has announced that General Da Silva left today for Havana accompanied by Hernandez Armas, Cuban Ambassador to Brazil. Da Silva's trip is reported to be related to an effort to bring Cuba "back into the Latin American community."

Dr. Raul Leoni, President of the ruling Democratic Action Party of Venezuela was quoted by Radio Continente in Caracas as saying: "The orders issued by Nikita Khrushchev to dismantle the atomic bases in Cuba proves that it is true that the territory of the country martyred by Fidel Castro has been turned into a beachhead for extracontinental military penetration in this continent of liberty and hope."

According to Radio Caribe (in the Dominican Republic) the Cuban people have learned officially but indirectly that the Soviet Union has offensive missile bases in Cuba. The announcement said that the Havana press had published the Khrushchev letter of October 23 to President Kennedy -- but without including the words "rocket bases."

AFRICA

African comment continued to trail the news. There are scattered indications however -- mostly of an official nature -- suggesting that the USSR is regarded as having suffered a defeat and offering somewhat of a revelation that Cuba was, after all, a Soviet satellite. Late African play from Ghana however tends to credit the Soviets for the peaceful solution. The Ghana Times (government) praised Khrushchev for the "biggest concession to mankind" while it continued to attack the legality of the American quarantine. The semi-independent Daily Graphic however headlined "Russia Agrees to Get Out" and editorially praised the Ghana Government for its help in achieving a negotiated solution. Meanwhile considerable pro-U.S. opinion has been revealed in a recent meeting of Ghana University students.

In Morocco, the opposition press has continued to emphasize the danger that all foreign bases -- including Moroccan and Turkish examples -- pose for host countries and for world peace. The Nigerian press reportedly favored the Turkey-for-Cuba scheme but subsequent comment is unavailable.

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NEAR EAST AND SOUTH ASIA

Available comment from the Near East and South Asia has been sparse on Khrushchev's Sunday letter, but indications are that it was considered to have fended off the imminence of war. Khrushchev had begun to earn kudos from the UAR, Syria and Iraq. Comment from other countries, however, indicated that the inconsistencies of the Soviet stand had not escaped informed observers and that Khrushchev's letter of Sunday merely showed that the Kremlin had decided to make the best of a losing proposition.

Through headlines and editorials, Arab world and Israeli media welcomed the easing of tension over Cuba. As a further indication that the heat was off as far as the Near East was concerned, top media attention reverted to local preoccupations, with few exceptions.

Available early comment pointed to the line that media in each country would take: The UAR, Syria and Iraq had begun to shower praise on Khrushchev for his "restraint" and "courage"; media in Israel (and probably Lebanon), while relieved, considered Khrushchev's backing down the result of a shrewd assessment on his part that the U.S. was serious and that his best move would be a conciliatory retreat that would be interpreted by many as a magnanimous peace gesture.

Even before Khrushchev's Sunday letter, Musa Sabry in Cairo's popular Al-Gumhuriyah wrote (October 28): "Real courage lies in retreating, if not retreating would lead the world to the brink of war." Cairo's weekly Akhbar al-Yawm said Sunday that if the Soviet Union withdrew, this was mainly because a clash with the United States should not be "in a place completely isolated from it," but rather where it can return the blow, "such as Berlin, Iran or the Far East." Damascus Radio carried Syrian Premier Azm's message to Khrushchev, terming the latter's stand as "brave and noble" and one that had "saved humanity from definite and complete destruction."

An Israeli commentator, on the other hand, termed the letter "a retreat which he is trying to cover up and present to the world as a gesture of peace." The same commentator noted an apparent difference of opinion in the Kremlin. A conciliatory note was seen not only in the letter but also in the decision to send Deputy Foreign Minister Kuznetsov, "a moderate politician," to New York.

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No editorial reaction to Khrushchev's Sunday message had yet been received from the Non-Arab Middle East. Meanwhile, however, both Prime Minister Inonu and Foreign Minister Erkin of Turkey have publicly expressed their pleasure over the news. Several Turkish papers had already predicted that Khrushchev would eventually have to back down. A most unusual editorial came from Ankara's Ulus (October 28), which argued that there would be no war over Cuba because the USSR realizes that within the next 10 or 15 years America and the USSR will have to be allied against Red China.

In India, where major attention continued to be focused on the Sino-Indian border dispute, the Indian Express found Zorin's evasive response to Stevenson's question whether the U.S. had or had not installed missile bases in Cuba convincing proof of the U.S. charge -- more convincing than the U.S. pictures of the bases, which the paper said could have been faked. Zorin's unconvincing answer, added the editorial, was made even less convincing by "Khrushchev's offer to remove the rockets which Mr. Zorin says aren't there."

The Tribune also pointed to the inconsistency between Zorin's statements and Khrushchev's subsequently expressed readiness to remove aggressive weapons from Cuba provided the Americans pulled their missiles out of Turkey. "To raise the question of U.S. missiles in Turkey, after so many years of their installation, in support of her wrong step in Cuba, does not do any credit to the USSR," said the Tribune.

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FAR EAST

Reaction from the majority of the Far East to the Soviet decision to withdraw its missile bases from Cuba has yet to arrive. Available reaction from Japan indicates, however, that Khrushchev's decision will draw front-page newsplay as well as heavy editorial comment throughout the area.

Free world reaction other than that from Japan, which was fully covered in the previous report, is available only from South Korea. Its Ministry of Foreign Affairs welcomed the news "in the interest of world peace and security" and stated that it "signifies the result of the resolute determination by the United States and the firm unity of the free world in their struggle against the aggressive actions of international communism". The Foreign Ministry went on to warn the free world "not to be deceived by the latest retreat of the Communists in Cuba", but to be prepared for a new Communist offensive "at any place the world over".

Peking's official news agency, NCNA, has transmitted a summary of Raul Castro's October 28 Santiago speech demanding the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Guantanamo. Portions touching on Cuban mobilization, civil and military, were given heavy play.

SOVIET UNION

Soviet propaganda is voluminous, but almost completely devoid of interpretation and elucidation. Such inactivity at a crucial moment in Moscow's international public relations could be the result of a number of important factors. The lack of original commentary could point to the myriad difficulties attending Khrushchev's rapid change of face.

In the absence of original comment, Moscow stresses the "peaceful step" of the Soviet government in maintaining and consolidating world peace and the "profound satisfaction and unanimous approval" that everywhere greet Khrushchev's last message to the President. TASS and the domestic radio also publicize statements of approval from Soviet and foreign public figures.

In an interesting aside, a Moscow broadcast to China, instead of stressing Soviet agreement to dismantle the bases in Cuba under U.N. supervision, dwells on the "provocative" nature of the U.S. "ruling clique's aggressive acts" and the "indignation" aroused by them throughout the world.

To the Soviet population the course of events, as reflected in their own media, must look somewhat confused. The regime never published or otherwise made available the text of the President's speech outlining the causes and remedies for the crisis. On October 29, Pravda printed the text of President Kennedy's 27 October reply (rejecting the bases-swap proposal) to Khrushchev's 26 October letter proposing such a swap. The messages exchanged between the USSR, U Thant and Castro have also been published in the Soviet Union. So has the text of Khrushchev's October 28 message to the President in which he agreed to dismantle the Soviet bases in Cuba. The President's reply to this came too late for today's Soviet papers, but Radio Moscow broadcast the full text. To confuse matters, Moscow has now also published without comment Castro's agreement for peace in the Caribbean, including evacuation of Guantanamo.

EUROPEAN SATELLITES

Since Premier Khrushchev's dramatic offer to withdraw Soviet missile bases from Cuba, Satellite media have been stressing heavily

both the "peaceloving" nature of the Soviet Premier and the victory of the "policy of peaceful coexistence" which his action represents. Propaganda output linked the Khrushchev decision closely with President Kennedy's "guarantee" for the security of Cuba and emphasized the need for U.S. deeds in reciprocating the Soviet peace initiative. What these "deeds" might involve was not spelled out; only Radio Budapest reported Fidel Castro's demand for American withdrawal from the Guantanamo naval base.

BULGARIA Radio Sofia interrupted its regular programs several times yesterday to inform listeners of Khrushchev's instructions to Soviet forces in Cuba to dismantle the missile installations there. Arguing that the Soviet Union wished only to "defend Cuba and preserve peace," the radio quoted Rabotnichesko Delo as saying that the "return of Soviet equipment from Cuba to the USSR is natural and justified." The Soviet Premier, BTA (Bulgarian Telegraph Agency) said, "has taken a noble and highly-humane step and once again saved the peace which is so dear to mankind, and prevented aggression against Cuba."

Radio Sofia said today that United Nations' observers assessed President Kennedy's reply to Khrushchev's proposal as a "victory of the Soviet policy of peaceful coexistence."

CZECHOSLOVAKIA No Czechoslovak reaction is yet available to the Soviet decision to withdraw missiles from Cuba. Earlier Czechoslovak propaganda output on the Cuban crisis pointed out that the Soviet decision not to start war because of the "piratical blockade of Cuba" was a victory for "the forces of peace." "We gained time, and time is working for us," Radio Prague stated.

EAST GERMANY Mass media in the Soviet zone followed Moscow's lead in presenting Khrushchev's decision to dismantle Soviet missile bases in Cuba as "another decisive step" to save world peace. Radio East Berlin, as well as most of the East European transmitters, linked this "decisive step" entirely with President Kennedy's assurance that the United States would keep hands off Cuba. While on the one hand the peace-loving character of Khrushchev and the Soviet Union were stressed, East Germans were

told on the other hand that it was now up to the United States to "furnish proof of its peaceful assertion."

Since President Kennedy's speech on Cuba a week ago, mass media in the Soviet zone have avoided carefully a comparison between the Cuban crisis and West Berlin, although visiting Cuban Communist leader Blas Roca tried on several occasions to point out the "similarity" of the two questions. Yesterday, however, a dispatch from REUTERS cited Communist diplomatic sources who had warned that the West should not be overconfident of forcing concessions out of the Soviet Union over Berlin following agreement on Cuba.

POLAND

Unlike that of Hungary, Poland's media propaganda seems to have skirted the question of the U.S. base in Turkey in dealing with the Khrushchev-Kennedy exchanges. In its first comment on Khrushchev's message of October 26, the Warsaw Domestic Service, on the following day, briefly mentioned that Khrushchev "suggested" a withdrawal by the U.S. of "similar military means" as those installed in Cuba from Turkish territory. But the gist of the comment was that now that Khrushchev has met Kennedy halfway the latter will have to show whether the possession of these arms by Cuba was the real cause of his actions or only a pretext to overthrow the Cuban revolution.

The most recent media reaction stresses the hopeful aspects of the latest developments. Polish correspondents in the U.S. describe the relief of tension in this country. While the Party organ Trybuna Ludu, looking to the future, stresses U.S. assurance that Cuba will not be invaded as "a most important obligation," the Army organ Zolnierz Wolnosci still speculates on "what was at the heart of the White House decision which had led the events to the brink of war." The verdict is: (a) the upcoming elections -- and here, the paper says, the Democratic leaders have shown an unusual temerity in making such fateful decisions for their own particular aims; (b) the typical imperialist need to pep up prosperity by creating an explosive situation.

HUNGARY

Perhaps taking its clue from Kadar's personal declaration of solidarity with Cuba in his interview with Cuban correspondents and the Cuban ambassador, Hungary appears now more eager to criticize the President's actions than seems dictated by the Kremlin line. Thus, Radio

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Budapest, in English, on October 27, was the first to comment on Mr. Kennedy's rejection of the Cuba-Turkey swap as "a bitter disappointment" to everybody. In its summary of the preceding events, the commentator asserted that the dangerous blockade -- this "Pentagon bluff" -- was aimed only at creating international tension and crushing the Cuban revolution. Kennedy's interest in maintaining tension by refusing to negotiate the bases was attributed to the fact that "his party has no other policy in the present election campaign." Analyzing the President's motives further, the commentator suggested that Mr. Kennedy "has become so much involved in his own bluff that he now sees no way out..."

In another "first," Budapest alone reported Fidel Castro's conditions for settlement, including American evacuation of Guantanamo.

ALBANIA Apart from news items incriminating the U.S. "aggressive" moves against Cuba (among others, an assertion that the U.S. is building a naval base in Ecuador), Radio Tirana, as reported so far, gave only a brief account of Khrushchev's agreement to dismantle the missile installations in Cuba, in consideration of "the desire of American people for peace." Evidently with a sour hint at Khrushchev's weak diplomacy, it added that according to the Western press, especially the West German press, this is "a victory for American diplomacy."

YUGOSLAVIA

Yugoslav reaction to the Soviet acceptance of the U.S. demand that the offensive weapons and missiles be removed from Cuba indicates that despite certain differences in tone, Yugoslav propaganda is following the general Soviet line on Cuban developments. Initially Yugoslavia viewed the outbreak of the Cuban crisis as "a flagrant American violation of international law" and "a threat to Cuba's independence." It rejected the American contention that Soviet missile bases were present on Cuban soil. When this position became untenable, Yugoslav media rallied in support of Khrushchev's proposal to trade Soviet bases in Cuba for the NATO bases in Turkey. Khrushchev's letter of October 26 in which this offer was made, was called "a compromise proposal." And

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the Yugoslav press warned the United States that refusal to accept it "will be a fatal mistake." When Khrushchev suddenly proclaimed his readiness to remove the missile sites in Cuba, Yugoslav again fell into line. The new proposals were called "a far reaching and conciliatory gesture," and the press began to speculate that settlement of the Cuban crisis might lead to a solution of other outstanding international problems.